

Should I Stay or Should I Come Out? by vikingtealight

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Coming Out, Gay Will Byers, Gen, Happy Ending, jonathan is always there for will

Language: English

Characters: Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Will Byers

Status: Completed

Published: 2017-12-08

Updated: 2017-12-08

Packaged: 2022-04-03 05:15:51

Rating: General Audiences

Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 1

Words: 1,978

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

After the Snow Ball, Will comes out to Jonathan.

Should I Stay or Should I Come Out?

Author's Note:

The girl Will dances with at the Snow Ball is named Heather because why not?

“So, how was the dance, boys?” Joyce asked, as soon as Jonathan and Will had gotten into the Pinto and buckled their seatbelts.

“Good,” said Will, even though he didn’t really mean it. He didn’t have a bad time exactly, but he would’ve rather spent the night at the arcade or in Mike’s basement, somewhere with just his friends.

“It was alright,” said Jonathan. “The kids really liked getting their pictures taken.”

“Aw, it was so good of you and Nancy to volunteer,” said Joyce, giving Jonathan’s hand a quick squeeze. “Did you have fun, Will?”

“Yeah, they played songs from *Footloose* and a ton of Cyndi Lauper, basically everything Jonathan hates,” teased Will. “It was great.”

“Hey, I’ll admit ‘Time After Time’ is a great song,” said Jonathan.

“What about ‘Girls Just Wanna Have Fun?’” asked Will.

“Ugh,” said Jonathan, cringing.

“Well, I’m glad you had fun with your friends tonight, Will,” said Joyce.

“Yeah, I did,” he said.

He felt like he should tell his mom about dancing with a girl. He had overheard Lucas telling his dad that his advice about Max worked when Mr. Sinclair picked him up.

“And... I also danced with Heather,” Will added.

He wondered if his paused too long because he thought he saw Jonathan’s shoulders tense for a second like Will has said something weird or surprising.

“Heather?” asked Joyce, wrinkling her nose a bit in confusion.

“Yeah, Heather Hewitt,” Will said, trying to sound excited.

“Oh, I didn’t know you were friends with the Marcy Hewitt’s daughter,” said Joyce, glancing back at Will in the rearview mirror.

“Well, we’re not really friends,” said Will, thinking about all the times she made fun of him. “It was just a dance... but it was fun.”

It wasn't. But he knew it should've been. Heather Hewitt was popular-adjacent and Dustin said she was pretty, so he should have been ecstatic just like all his friends had been after "Every Breathe You Take" *finally* ended. But he hadn't wanted to dance with Heather Hewitt. Or any other girls.

"That's great, sweetie," said Joyce, smiling at him in the rearview mirror.

Will nodded. It felt like he had said the right thing, but he felt unsettled by Jonathan not saying anything. It wasn't unusual for Jonathan to hold back his opinion unless asked for it, but Will had hoped he would say something. Jonathan always told Will how it was okay to not be normal, but now he was dating Nancy Wheeler and volunteering to take pictures for the Snow Ball. Jonathan never used to show his photography to anyone, and he didn't even go to his own dances when he was in middle school. It was like Jonathan was getting more and more normal, while Will was just getting weirder and weirder. He could be a freak if Jonathan was too, but he didn't think he could handle being a freak alone.

As Will lay in bed that night, unable to sleep, it felt like the truths he had swallowed in the car were trying trying to climb out of his stomach. He kept thinking about how he felt like he did when he first came back from the Upside Down and he would throw up those disgusting slug creatures. He decided to get a glass of water, more to have something to do than because he thought it would actually help.

Jonathan was rummaging through the freezer when Will walked into the kitchen. Will paused in the doorway, while Jonathan pulled out a tub of ice cream and shut the freezer door.

“Jesus!” Jonathan jumped when he saw Will. “You scared me.”

“Sorry,” said Will.

“Couldn’t sleep?”

Will shook his head.

“Wanna eat this in my room?” Jonathan asked, gesturing to the ice cream. “I have ‘Girls Just Wanna Have Fun’ stuck in my head and I need to play something else to drown it out.”

Will nodded, got two spoons out of the drawer, and followed Jonathan to his room. Jonathan put on one of his mixtapes and the voice of David Bowie filled the air. Jonathan joined Will on the floor, leaning against his bed, the ice cream container in between them.

Will ate small bites of ice cream, not really enjoying it. He wondered if telling Jonathan would make this queasy feeling go away. He knew Jonathan wouldn’t hate him if he told him that he was gay. He wouldn’t call him any of those names that their Dad or the bullies at school called him. But a small part of him wondered if Jonathan would be secretly disgusted. Maybe Jonathan wouldn’t stop loving him, but maybe he would love him less.

You’re being ridiculous , he thought to himself. *You’d love him no*

matter what, right? He loves you the same way.

“Will, you okay?” asked Jonathan.

Will inadvertently let out an annoyed noise, not at Jonathan but at himself.

“Sorry am I babying you again?” asked Jonathan. “It’s just... if there’s ever anything you want to talk about, you can tell me.”

Will thought back to the way Jonathan had spoken to him after he came back from the Upside Down, all delicate and careful. *What would change once Jonathan knew this?*

“Do you still think you’re a freak?” Will asked because he couldn’t ask his real question.

Jonathan looked confused.

“Now that you’re dating Nancy, I mean,” said Will. “Freaks don’t get girlfriends.”

“I still think I’m a freak,” said Jonathan, smiling. “Except now, I’m a freak with a really cool girlfriend.”

Jonathan's smile had grown even bigger when he said "girlfriend" and a blush had spread across his cheeks.

"Why do you ask?"

Will shrugged, then he said, "Sometimes you just seem so normal now. Dating a popular girl. Going to the mall instead of sitting in your room all day. You even joined Yearbook."

"Only because I need some extracurriculars to get into NYU," said Jonathan. "I'm still a freak who has no friends besides my little brother and my girlfriend. I still eat lunch in my car instead of in the cafeteria. I'm still way more into music than normal people. I think freak is something you're born as. You don't outgrow it."

Will nodded, glad Jonathan still considered himself a freak.

"You and me, we'll always be freaks," said Jonathan, bumping his shoulder against Will's. "And that's good, remember?"

Tell him, said the voice in Will's head. *You survived an attack from a monster from another dimension. You can do this, Will.*

Will was silent. He looked down and picked at the carpet.

He thought about how he only escaped the demogorgon because he was good at hiding. When it came to himself, maybe Will was too

good at hiding. *No one's coming to save you this time*, he thought. *You have to face this one yourself.*

“Will?” prompted Jonathan.

Will kept picking at the carpet, and he could tell Jonathan was still looking at him, but Jonathan didn't say anything. Will finally looked up at Jonathan after what felt like an eternity. He saw Jonathan staring back at him, his eyes were kind, just like they always are.

Will got up and took the mixtape out of the tape deck.

“What are you doing?” asked Jonathan.

Will found the tape he was looking for, put it in the tape deck, and pressed play. “Should I Stay or Should I Go?” started playing through the speakers.

“When you played this for me while I was possessed by the shadow monster and you talked about the first time we listened to this, you left out the most important part,” Will said as he sat back down.

Jonathan was quiet for a moment; then, he guessed, “That you shouldn't like things because people tell you you're supposed to?”

“Yeah,” said Will, feeling his heart speeding up. “Do you think that applies to people? Like is it okay to not like people that you should

like?”

“Of course,” Jonathan let out a laugh. “You’re not obligated to like anyone. I don’t like most people.”

“What about...” he struggled to find the right words and fell back on the the way people described crushes in the first grade. “What about like-liking someone?”

“Same thing,” said Jonathan. “And for the record, you should like the person you like-like.”

“I don’t like-like Heather Hewitt,” Will admitted. “I don’t really even like her.”

“Good, I know her brother and he’s a jerk.”

“But shouldn’t I? She’s pretty and kind of popular.”

“You know those aren’t very good reasons to like someone.”

“Yeah, but...” Will wasn’t sure where he was going with this. “But she asked me to dance.”

“You shouldn’t like someone just because they like you,” said

Jonathan slowly.

“But Mike and Lucas like-like the girls they danced with.”

“And Dustin danced with Nancy,” said Jonathan. “Do you think I have something to worry about?”

Will rolled his eyes.

“You don’t have to like everyone you dance with,” said Jonathan. “Sometimes a dance is just a dance. Isn’t that what you said in the car?”

“It’s just that, if I don’t like Heather...” he said.

I’ll probably never like any girl, he finished the sentence in his head.

“Do you remember what else I said to you that day?” Jonathan asked.

Will shook his head, not sure what Jonathan was referring to.

“When you asked if I thought Dad would ever come back,” said Jonathan quietly.

Will felt a small rush of shame. He hated that a part of him had ever wanted his dad was in his life.

“You said whatever happened, you and Mom would always be there for me.”

“Yeah,” said Jonathan as he put his hand on Will’s shoulder. “And I meant it. I still mean it.”

“Even if...”

I’m gay, he thought. Why can’t I just say that?

Jonathan squeezed his shoulder gently and suddenly the words just came out.

“Even if I don’t like girls?” asked Will. His chest felt heavy. “Even if I like boys instead?”

Will felt the moment between his question and Jonathan’s response would last forever. The words that were so hard to get out were suddenly hanging in the air. The slug was out of Will and in the bathroom sink. Everything was in the open, and all Will felt was terror of what was to come.

Jonathan moved the ice cream from between them and gripped both of Will’s shoulders; he looked Will in the eye and said, “Of course

we'll still be there for you. Of course."

Will couldn't tell if he had pulled Jonathan into a hug or if Jonathan had pulled him into a hug. Maybe they had grabbed each other. This hug felt just like the one Will received after they had exorcised the shadow monster.

Why should saying you like boys be as difficult as fighting a demon from another dimension? Will wondered.

"Mom and I love you, no matter what," said Jonathan, his voice shaking a bit. "You know that right?"

"Yeah," said Will, realizing he was crying when his voice came out equally shaky.

Will pulled back from the hug. The boys wiped their tears on their sleeves, laughing a little bit, overwhelmed by the sudden onslaught of emotion.

"I don't want to tell Mom, or anyone else, yet," said Will.

"Okay," said Jonathan. "I won't say anything, but I'll be there with you if you want, whenever you're ready."

I told Jonathan and the world didn't end, Will thought and then felt silly. My family went to an alternate dimension to bring me home. They

fought demonic monsters for me. How could I ever think they'd stop loving me for liking boys?

Jonathan put his arm around Will, and for the first time since that cold November night in 1983, Will Byers believed everything would turn out alright.

Author's Note:

Hope you liked it! Follow me on [tumblr!](#)